

REPORT ON THE CONFERENCE ON
BROADCASTING TO SCHOOLS
held at
UNESCO HOUSE
Paris

June 27th - July 1st, 1949

At the Plenary session of UNESCO, held in the Fall of 1948, authorization was voted for a survey on Broadcasting to Schools among member nations, also, authorization was voted for the appointment of six persons to act as an advisory committee to UNESCO on Radio Education for the purpose of evaluating the findings of the proposed survey, to decide on the possibilities of publishing a report based on the survey and to make suggestions for its implementation.

Such a survey was made based on a rather complete questionnaire prepared under the supervision of Mr. Philip Desjardin, head of the Division of Technical Needs of UNESCO. Subsequently, Mr. Desjardin appointed a Mr. Clause, Deputy Director of Radio for Belgium, to prepare a report based on the findings of these questionnaires. This document, or report, which included Mr. Clause's report, the questionnaires, opinions and other relative material was gathered together and became known as the 'Clause Report'. It was translated into English for the majority of the delegates, and submitted to the six persons who had been appointed members of the Radio Advisory Committee to be gone over and digested, so to speak, previous to the meeting in Paris.

The five people who finally made up this panel of 'experts' as delegates to the conference were:

M. Rene Dovaz - - - - - Director,
Radio-Geneve,
Geneve, Suisse

N. A. S. Lakshmann- - - - - Director General
All India Radio
New Delhi, India

Arne Okkenhaug- - - - - Director of School Broad-
casting
Norsk Rikskringkasting
Oslo, Norway

Richmond Postgate - - - - - Head of School Broadcasting
The British Broadcasting
Corporation
London, England

Judith C. Waller- - - - - Director, Public Affairs
and Education
Central Division
National Broadcasting Compa
Chicago, Illinois, U. S. A.

the sixth delegate, a representative from Czechoslovakia, was unable to obtain a French visa in time to attend the conference.

My copy of the Clause report arrived at my office the day before I left Chicago, so I had no time to look it through until I boarded the train for New York. I should state here that it was hoped by UNESCO that the report could be used as a guide by educators, administrators or teachers in setting up a project of broadcasting to schools in countries or places where no such service existed.

My first reading through of the report left me completely confused. It was wordy, ponderous and, I felt, a disorganized document, written in a florid style. I was at loss to know who the author had in mind as the recipient of the information, and I could not believe that anyone hoping to inaugurate school broadcasting would be able to secure the necessary guidance and help from it. Frankly, I had to read through the report three times before actually understanding what Mr. Clause was attempting to say, and I have been working in the field of educational radio for 27 years! A poor translation may have been the cause of some of the confusion.

My marginal notes all the way through the over 200 pages of the report (the complete document is 654 pages long) carry the words "simplify", "rewrite for clarity", "what is he trying to say or convey", "delete in entirety", "duplication", etc.

It was not surprising to me, therefore, to be called on the telephone Monday morning, June 27th, just before leaving my hotel for UNESCO House by Mr. Richmond Postgate, the representative from Great Britain, and to hear him say: "Miss Waller, I do not know, of course, how you feel about this Clause report, but we at the BBC could not support it in any way." I assured him that I felt much as he did and hoped that we would be able to talk it over.

The first session of the conference was called to order on June 27th at 10 AM by Mr. Desjardin. Seated around the table were the five delegates, Mr. Douglas Schneider, head of the Department of Mass Communications for UNESCO; Mr. Desjardin, head of the Division of Technical Needs and his assistant, Mr. Pierre Naveaux; Mr. Gordon Frazier, head of the Radio Program Division and his assistant, Mr. Jose Garza, Mr. Clause, the author of the report, the translator and a stenographer. Also each delegate was permitted an observer. Fortunately for me, Mrs. Victoria Corey, Educational Director of KDKA, Pittsburgh and responsible for broadcasting to schools there, was in Paris and Mr. Desjardin very kindly offered to appoint her as my observer.

Mr. Desjardin introduced the delegates to each other and to the others at the table - stated the purpose of the conference and told us what he hoped would result from the meeting. He also said he hoped that the meetings could be informal. The very fact, of course, that the representative from Switzerland, Mr. Dovaz, did not speak or understand English, which was also true in the case of Mr. Clause, necessitated every-

thing being translated from English into French or visa versa, formalized the meetings. (All of the others spoke and understood English.) On the other hand, because we were forced to wait for these translations, we were given time for reflection which proved of value as the conference progressed.

Inasmuch as the conference had to have a chairman, we voted to put Mr. Dovaz in that chair. I was named Vice-Chairman.

No one was quite sure just where or how to begin our discussions so, unfortunately, we opened the report to the first page and started to go through it word by word, sentence by sentence and paragraph by paragraph. It soon became evident that we would never get through in one week at this rate. We also soon found out that Mr. Clause was resenting and objecting to our comments and criticisms. This annoyed the delegates as we did not feel we were in any way responsible to him. He had been paid to write a report which was to be used as the basis for our discussions and we, as experts, were supposed to be at liberty to accept or reject the report in whole or in part as we saw fit.

It was evident, too, before the morning was over that the majority of the delegates felt as I have indicated above, that the report was not a good document and could not be accepted. We also felt that it had been a mistake to ask Mr. Clause to sit in on our deliberations as it put us and him on the defensive and did not leave us free to express our real feelings or beliefs about the report. We managed to get this across to Mr. Schneider and on Tuesday when we convened Mr. Clause was absent from the session. We were then asked, by Mr. Desjardin, to write a statement giving our criticisms and objections to the report. These statements he would integrate into an anonymous statement and give to Mr. Clause for his information and comments. I, personally, could see no purpose in this, as, frankly, we were not concerned with what Mr. Clause thought about our objections; the report was completely unusable in any form and nothing Mr. Clause could say could, in our opinion, change that fact.

(On the morning of the fourth day Mr. Clause was called back into the conference and thanked by Mr. Schneider for the time and effort he had taken in preparing a report which had proved to be of value in motivating the discussions in the field of School Broadcasting by the committee of experts - and he was then dismissed. The Clause report was buried and we got on with the business of preparing a new document.)

Inasmuch as we were not willing to approve the report we were asked to suggest headings for chapters or statements on broadcasting to schools which we were to prepare during the next two days and which, in turn, would be a substitute document to be published as the guide for the establishment of a program for broadcasting to schools. Some ten headings were suggested and each of us were assigned one or two of these subjects and requested to prepare a statement to be integrated into this new document. Anyone with any knowledge of the entire field can understand that it is quite impossible for five people, overnight, to write such a guidebook in this fashion. We needed time to think through the whole field, time to consult sources and other

authorities, in fact, we needed several months not days to turn out the type of document which we felt would be worthy of publication by UNESCO.

I am sure you are not interested in the hours of discussion that went on before we persuaded the UNESCO people to throw out the Clause report completely and to get on with the preparation of a substitute. We also spent some time in formulating suggestions of projects UNESCO could undertake which would be helpful to all member nations.

When the conference closed its sessions on Friday afternoon, July 1st, we had, very reluctantly, agreed to the publication of the statements we had hurriedly prepared, plus the questionnaires, plus other factual material which was to be gathered from suggested sources, plus a bibliography, plus one or two other items of relevant interest. Before, however, this new document could be published we were to be permitted to see it for a final check. Mr. Desjardin is at present getting together all of this material, rewriting our statements to bring some continuity out of the disjointed bits and we should have this revised document within the next few weeks. Maybe we took our job too seriously - but I do not think so - we are serious people and believed we had a serious job to do.

Now as to my personal reactions and suggestions.

In the first place, I am thoroughly convinced that one week is far too short a period for a conference of this kind. A minimum of two weeks should be allowed. When you bring together people of different tongues and nationalities it takes several days for them to get to know each other, to learn how each thinks or reacts to suggestions and ideas before a profitable discussion can ensue. Even if all of the delegates spoke the same language much time would be lost on the connotation of words used in the different countries. For instance, in England the word 'propaganda' is used where we use the word 'promotion' and such differences arose again and again and required too much time for clarification.

In the second place, delegates should have been appointed to this conference months in advance of the meeting and told specifically the exact nature of the conference and the area of the deliberations. Then each delegate should have been asked to go to Paris prepared with a statement on broadcasting to schools. These practical statements which we would have had time to think through would have been far better as springboards for our discussion than the wordy, unusable document prepared by Mr. Clause at a cost of about \$1000, which I believe was the amount he was paid for drafting his report. If such a procedure had been adopted UNESCO would have been saved that \$1000, they would have had a better and more workmanlike document for publication, Mr. Clause would not have been embarrassed, Mr. Desjardin would not have been embarrassed and the delegates would not have been embarrassed.

In the third place, if UNESCO is thinking of carrying these surveys forward into the field of adult education, which I understand is being considered, there should be some integration between this school survey and the one in the adult field. Time, effort and expense might thus be saved as there are overlapping areas and it will be too bad if much of the spade work will have

to be repeated. This can be avoided somewhat if, say, one or two members of this present committee can be invited to be part of a subsequent committee evaluating radio education in other fields or areas in an endeavor to enlarge the scope and influence of radio.

In the fourth place, and incidently, I feel very strongly about this point, I still can see no reason why we should have been rushed into publishing a document at this time. Mr. Schneider stated, when the question was raised, that inasmuch as the Plenary session of UNESCO had authorized this report and the appointment of the Committee it was necessary to have a document to present to them at the forthcoming Plenary session meeting in Paris this Fall. As I firmly believe that too many documents are published hurriedly, in order to show quantity not quality, it would seem to me that it would have been far better for us to have drafted a statement to be presented to the Plenary session stating that the Radio Advisory Committee had met to consider the Clause report which we had been asked to evaluate and that we had found it unacceptable. We had decided to draft a substitute document which we hoped would be worthy of publication by UNESCO at an early date. Such a statement would have been evidence of our sincerity of purpose and should be much more acceptable to UNESCO than a document hurriedly prepared. All of the delegates, I am sure, would have come away more satisfied that they had fulfilled a useful mission than they do now. This carries over into our own responsibility as well. When I raised this point Mr. Desjardin told us that UNESCO was responsible, not the delegates, for the document which was to come out of this conference, but none of us was willing to accept that statement. I stated that as far as I was concerned, I felt responsible to the State Department of the United States Government, to the educational broadcasters in this country and to the commercial broadcasters, as well as to myself. I also said I was connected with a commercial organization and that undoubtedly my appointment had come somewhat as a surprise to many educational broadcasters who might have resented it thinking they should have been appointed instead, so that any document which came out of this conference would be read very critically in this country by many people. If there was disagreement, especially among the educational radio people, there could be just cause for their criticism of me as a delegate. It was not so easy, therefore, for me to accept Mr. Desjardin's statement that we, as delegates, or each of us personally, would not be held responsible for whatever document came out of the conference. I cannot help but feel, rightly or wrongly, that Mr. Desjardin was much more concerned with getting something down on paper than for turning out the type of document, we, as delegates, wanted to bring forth. He is, of course, the channel through which the report goes out to the countries of the world, but we, the delegates, on the other hand, will be held responsible, as authors of the report. Each of us has a prestige and standing within our own country which we must guard very jealously. As I have said before, I cannot believe that we were accepting our responsibility too seriously - we were serious and we did feel a very definite responsibility to ourselves, to our countries and to UNESCO.

Respectfully submitted,

Judith C. Waller

July 23rd, 1949

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